

DOLLY DOES SAIGON: DIPLOMACY AND THE  
SEXUAL POLITICS OF SHOW BUSINESS  
IN THE VIETNAM WAR

by

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## ABSTRACT

This project investigates the representation of American actresses Mary Martin and Jane Fonda during the Vietnam War and why they are inversely committed to American cultural memory. Mary Martin's involvement as a Broadway performer in an active war zone reinforced her legacy as America's sweetheart. Jane Fonda's role as a feminist, antiwar protester constructed her reputation as an un-American traitor. Both women promoted different agendas of American interventionism in Asia based on their interaction styles with Asian nationals and relationships with the US government. Martin and Fonda's dueling legacies reveal how the politicization of female performers during the Vietnam War weaponized both women to advance American imperialism in Asia.

*Shlitz down the drain!  
Pop the Champagne!  
It's time we all entertain  
My American dream!*

*Miss Saigon*, 1989 Alain Boublil and Richard Maltby

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Broadway darling Mary Martin performed show tunes from the American Broadway musical *Hello, Dolly!* to American troops and Vietnamese civilians in South Vietnam at the beginning of US military involvement in the Vietnam War in 1965. Sent by the US State Department as a cultural diplomat to Japan and South Vietnam, Martin entertained troops and, more importantly, encouraged cultural exchange between the United States and postwar Japan and South Vietnam. Martin's comportment as a motherly and patriotic woman presented US interests in Japan and South Vietnam as friendly, racially tolerant, and charitable during uncertain times. Martin's carefully crafted public image as a traditionally gendered intermediary between American and Asian cultures helped establish a protocol for public American women's involvement in US foreign affairs. Mary Martin's nonthreatening agenda of soft diplomacy helped situate the United States as an ally to what Americans perceived as defenseless and vulnerable Asian nationals desperate for US intervention during wartime and national reconstruction.

By the war's end stages in July, 1972, Hollywood actress Jane Fonda had posed with North Vietnamese soldiers by an antiaircraft machine gun in Hanoi. Fonda transitioned from a racy movie star in the 1960s to an antiwar activist in the early 1970s.

Americans resented Fonda's rejection of US policies in Vietnam and felt disgusted that she appeared to side with the communist North Vietnamese. Fonda's antiwar activism and feminist politics counteracted Mary Martin's mission abroad because she condemned the United States' involvement in Vietnam as imperialist and detrimental to Vietnamese national interests. Fonda's involvement in foreign affairs cemented her reputation as a traitor because she advocated for Vietnamese independence and exposed the racist motives of US intervention in "third world" Asian countries.

Martin's performance of *Hello, Dolly!* show tunes warranted the cover of *Life* magazine and Fonda's widely criticized "traitor stance" with enemy forces resulted in the production of Jane Fonda themed urinal target stickers and toilet paper. Martin's matronly qualities and presentation of traditional American values to Japanese and South Vietnamese audiences secured US interests in Asia because she created a market for the American entertainment industry and helped Westernize postwar Japan. Fonda's antiwar activism and feminist politics challenged US interests in Asia because she condemned US foreign policy in Communist North Vietnam. Martin and Fonda inhabited contradictory positions for women at two different stages of the Vietnam War

## CHAPTER 2

### CALL ON DORRY SAN: MARY MARTIN, CULTURAL DIPLOMACY, AND GENDER CONFORMITY FROM TOKYO TO SAIGON

Mary Martin received Kennedy Center Honors in 1989 for her iconic roles as Nellie Forbush in Broadway's *South Pacific*, Maria Von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*, Peter in *Peter Pan*, and Dolly Levi in *Hello, Dolly!* Broadway singer Bernadette Peters introduced Martin at the televised ceremony and recollected how Martin influenced her as a performer. Peters observed, "I was watching a television special about a magical boy who never grew up and all the wonderful things he could do. And when the show was over, I remember going to bed crying that night because I couldn't fly the way he did. I guess for a few hours I just knew that anything in the world was possible. Because that little girl from Texas had grown up to be Mary Martin and Mary Martin had grown up to be Peter Pan."<sup>1</sup> Peters' introduction recognized Martin's widespread appeal as an entertainer who originated some of the most beloved roles in Broadway history and qualified her as an American icon.

Mary Martin's Kennedy Center honors cemented her credibility and mainstream appeal with generations of Americans. Martin's status as one of the most popular

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<sup>1</sup> "Mary Martin- (Complete) Kennedy Center Honors, 1989," accessed March 1, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGZKleAzi>.

entertainers of the mid-twentieth century held political sway at the onset of US military combat in the Vietnam War in 1965. President Johnson recruited Martin to introduce American show tunes and cultural values to the Japanese and South Vietnamese. He also hoped to shore up Americans' support for the US presence in South Vietnam. Mary Martin became one of the bestselling musical acts in the United States following the premiere of *South Pacific* in 1949. Martin's record-breaking album and ticket sales suggest that American fans followed her career for several generations and trusted the Mary Martin brand.<sup>2</sup> President Johnson banked on Martin's celebrity to bolster support for the war effort because of the State Department's hefty financial backing of the *Hello, Dolly!* production.

President Johnson deployed Mary Martin to Asia as part of the State Department's "Cultural Presentations Program" in the fall of 1965.<sup>3</sup> Following her sold-out North American tour of the Broadway musical *Hello, Dolly!*, Martin and her cast-mates brought *Dolly* to Japan, Korea, and South Vietnam. President Johnson placed a seemingly apolitical, married, middle-aged woman on an international stage to win the hearts and minds of potential Asian allies. Martin helmed a strategic cultural and political mission abroad and the tour garnered significant media attention in the United States. As a public figure who resonated with Americans for her old-fashioned showmanship, squeaky clean public record, and preference for roles based on traditional gender values, Martin exemplified an ideal female ambassador. Martin was a suitable liaison between the United States and Asia during the Cold War because her public

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<sup>2</sup> "Martin and Pinza Make Theater History in Musical Play," *Life*, April 18, 1949, 93.

<sup>3</sup> "Call on Dolly: Celebrating Fifty Years of Hello, Dolly!," accessed February 14, 2013, <http://www.callondolly.com/mary-martin/>.

reputation as a respectable American icon helped her lead the US project to popularize American culture in non-Communist Asian nations.

During the period of gradual decolonization of many European and American colonies in Asia following World War II, the US government pursued a hegemonic cultural agenda to win international allies in a shifting political and economic landscape. American women's prescribed gender roles functioned as part of a political agenda to ally with and influence the economic future of Asian countries such as Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The Truman and Eisenhower Administrations strategically worked to present the United States as a nonimperial, family-friendly beacon of soft diplomacy and good-willed ambassadorship to Asia in order to befriend many countries on the brink of economic expansion, increased industrialization, and potential Communist leanings. Mary Martin's performance as matchmaker turned trophy wife Dolly Levi in *Hello, Dolly!* presented a nonthreatening woman conformant with Cold War era gendered expectations of women as homemakers, mothers, and adherents to male authority.<sup>4</sup> *Hello, Dolly!* operated as a political weapon to celebrate nostalgic American show tunes and implant their appeal in the hearts of Asian spectators and potential Asian allies to Cold War era US economic and military agendas.

White, American women established a foothold in Asia following the American Civil War and traveled to China, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and French Indochina as Christian missionaries, teachers, visual artists, authors, nurses, and women's suffrage activists. American missionary workers effectively delivered the American social gospel to Asia. Female missionaries and teachers established a strong presence in China and

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<sup>4</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 78.

Korea where they converted a large population of Koreans to Christianity.<sup>5</sup> American women suffrage activists and nurses worked to construct an Americanized Filipino culture that gradually implemented Victorian-era hygienic practices such as the adoption of modernized restroom facilities and improved childcare methods.<sup>6</sup> American women's roles as missionaries, teachers, and nurses cast women as domestic-oriented diplomats that mostly enforced, rather than challenged, women's domestic roles from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

The Vietnam War maintained this trajectory of American women's advocacy of the United States' role as a cultural overseer in Asia. From the early 1960s through the mid-1970s, American women traveled to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia as volunteers, nurses, relief workers, U.S.O. hostesses, and journalists to support US troops and show their patriotism for the war and the spread of American capitalism in Asia.<sup>7</sup> White, American women functioned as helpmates to American men's efforts to fight in wars in Asia, enact domestic immigration policies, and generate a Cold War consensus about how the United States should represent itself in a greater effort to thwart Communism and establish American influence in Asia. White, American women adopted nonthreatening, traditional gender roles to help enforce a gendered ideology that confirmed the United States' national strength against Communism at the height of the Cold War. Women increasingly assumed domestic roles as mothers and homemakers in

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<sup>5</sup> Hyaewool Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (California: University of California Press, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Kristin L. Hoganson, "'As Badly off as the Filipinos': US Women's Suffragists and the Imperial Issue at the Turn of the Twentieth Century." *Journal of Women's History* 13, no. 2. (2001): 11.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Hershberger, *Traveling to Vietnam: American Peace Activists and the War* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998).

the postwar United States to build confidence in the strength of the American family unit amidst growing uncertainty about the spread of Communism. To win the hearts and minds of potential Asian allies susceptible to Communism, white, American women exemplified the gender roles and values that the United States hoped to instill in Asian nations at the brink of new national beginnings and economic reconstruction. At the height of the Cold War, Martin represented the ideally feminine grande dame equipped to secure “friends” for the United States in a decolonizing Asia.

Martin fashioned a livelihood where she enacted a theatrical trope of tomboys’ transformations into traditional womanhood. Mary Martin graced the cover of *Life* magazine in 1949 and the accompanying article claimed that *South Pacific* “had the biggest advance sale on Broadway ever” and “Mary Martin, at her peak as a singer, dancer, and actress, becomes in *South Pacific* one of the stage’s really great ladies.”<sup>8</sup> In *The Sound of Music* Martin played a nun whose self-worth improved through her marriage to a handsome military captain and single father.<sup>9</sup> Martin’s character Maria Von Trapp failed to conform to the expectations of a convent and eventually became a governess-turned-stepmother who fled the Nazis. In *South Pacific* Martin played a boyish World War II Army nurse who marries a French plantation owner and father to mixed-race children.<sup>10</sup> Martin defined herself as a woman who successfully married, mothered, and outgrew her tomboy inclinations.

Martin’s star turn in *South Pacific* landed her business deals as a model for beauty

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<sup>8</sup> “Martin and Pinza Make Theater History in Musical Play,” *Life*, 93.

<sup>9</sup> *The Sound of Music*, directed by Robert Wise (1965; Austria: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 2010), Blu-ray DVD.

<sup>10</sup> *South Pacific*, directed by Joshua Logan (1958; Kauai, HI: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 2009), Blu-ray DVD.

products such as Rayve hair curlers. She appeared perfectly groomed in three different advertisements where she sported a home permanent and wore a full-length, 1950s polka dot dress (Figure 1).<sup>11</sup> Martin represented Rayve's ideal consumer because she valued beauty products for her personal use and also for her daughter. Martin enjoyed credibility as a mother who could legitimately impart beauty advice onto generations of women.

Mary Martin worked diligently to maintain a respectable public image. Martin's boyish haircut, convincing tomboy mannerisms onstage, and alleged romantic relationships with several Hollywood actresses suggest that she was a lesbian, but she endeared American audiences with her transformations from tomboy into appropriate womanhood. Allegations of lesbianism only appeared later in Martin's life with little to no impact on her professional career and legacy.<sup>12</sup> Playwright James Kirkwood presented a telling character study of Mary Martin's media-darling persona and how she fought to maintain it in his 1989 book *Diary of a Mad Playwright: Perilous Adventures on the Road with Mary Martin and Carol Channing*. In his campaign to convince Martin to star in his upcoming play *Legends!* about two dueling Hollywood divas costarring in a comeback show, Kirkwood vetted Martin to play the mild-mannered diva as opposed to the bitchy diva played by Carol Channing.

Kirkwood validates Martin's clean cut legacy and illustrates her determination to maintain it during her retirement. Kirkwood recounted a conversation with Martin where

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<sup>11</sup> "1950s Vintage ad for Rayve Wave Home Permanent/Mary Martin," accessed August 26, 2013, <http://www.eBay.com/itm/1950s-Vintage-ad-for-Rayve-Wave-Home-Permanent-Mary-Martin-063013-/221275476141>.

<sup>12</sup> Stacy Wolfe, *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 47.





he boasted about her conservative public image to convince her to star in his play. Kirkwood wrote that Martin “always had a rather sweet image, an image of a total professional, who doesn’t swear or carouse but who’s still been rather canny about her career.”<sup>13</sup> When asked to shout the word “fuck” in a scene, Martin at first refused and told Kirkwood, “But, darling, you see, I have this goody-goody image and the audience simply will not take certain words from me.”<sup>14</sup> Martin ultimately starred in a national tour of *Legends!* and Kirkwood capitalized on the revival of her “goody two shoes” image. Kirkwood designed Martin’s role in *Legends!* as a nod to her unparalleled career in show business during the Cold War era. Martin’s hesitance to utter profanities onstage in front of her fans showed that she conceived of her identity through the way Americans conceived of her reputation. The symbolism of this good-girl image carried political significance on the international stage.

Mary Martin helmed a double-ad campaign launched by Pan American Airways (Pan Am) in the 1950s that promoted international travel to places like Bermuda and Europe. Pan Am’s colorful advertisement urged Americans to “fly with Peter Pan” and tour exotic locations abroad (Figure 2).<sup>15</sup> For example, Martin appeared in a Pan Am advertisement that promoted travel to Bermuda in 1950 where she sang with a band of local Bermudan calypso musicians after she disembarked from the airplane (Figure 3).<sup>16</sup> Martin, a Pan Am patron, applauded Pan Am’s quality service and presented a glowing review of Bermuda. She praised the hospitality of Pan Am employees and the natural

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<sup>13</sup> James Kirkwood, *Diary of a Mad Playwright: Perilous Adventures on the Road with Mary Martin and Carol Channing* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989), 24.

<sup>14</sup> Kirkwood, *Diary of a Mad Playwright*, 33.

<sup>15</sup> “How Peter Pan Flew to Paris,” *Life*, 1956.

<sup>16</sup> “Perfection! Says Mary Martin Star of ‘South Pacific,’” *New Yorker*, October 28, 1950.



Mary Martin arriving in Paris from New York on Pan American's famous President Special

### *How Peter Pan flew to Paris*

"Thank you, again, for a wonderful, wonderful flight," said Mary Martin as she stepped down on Orly Field. Mary Martin, who has flown as Peter Pan 107 times on stage and TV, chose to fly the Atlantic on The President Special . . . world's most luxurious air service.

What Mary Martin did, you can do now at reduced Third Season rates. And you'll find yourself in a mood to sing to Super Strakosker, belting Shogunette! and . . .

Mr. Martin's of Pan reads, complimentary: noMails, champagne, liquor! Both available at extra cost.

Or choose the Thrifty Traveler service by guest DC-7B Clipper, with the same experienced crew as on first-class President Special and extra-class President Special. Only \$52 down, if you use Pan Am's original "Pay-Later" Plan. Convenient. Flexible. Pan Am never lends itself to dollars. See your Travel Agent or call your Pan American office.

**PAN AMERICAN**  
WORLD'S MOST EXPERIENCED AIRLINE

Figure 2. "How Peter Pan flew to Paris." A Pan American World Airways pilot salutes Mary Martin for her service as a Pan Am passenger and pinup girl, *Life*, 1956.

*Perfection!*

SOYS **MARY MARTIN**  
star of "SOUTH PACIFIC"

*"Our trip to Bermuda was superb—the most wonderful, restful, week of my life!"*

"Perfection!" wrote Miss Martin. "That is what you and every single, solitary person we met connected with Pan American made our trip."

"And Bermuda! We loved its warm sunshine, pink beaches, sugarbush houses and brilliant flowers everywhere. My admiration and gratitude to everyone at Pan American for making possible the most wonderful, restful week of my life."

Beginning at \$115 for a week, your Travel Agent and Pan American can arrange several all-expense tours to Bermuda, ranging from a week to a month. Call your Travel Agent or the nearest Pan American office.

*Miss Martin waves good-bye from a speedboat on her last day in Bermuda.*

Ask your Travel Agent or Pan American how you can spend a week in Bermuda, including round-trip fare, room and breakfasts, for only **\$115** plus tax

What a weekend with New York! You'll get a kick, just the way Mary Martin did, out of Bermuda's Caribbean singers.

**PAN AMERICAN**  
WORLD'S MOST EXPERIENCED AIRLINE

Figure 3. "Perfection!" Mary Martin goes native in Bermuda to encourage travel to the "exotic" Caribbean, *New Yorker*, October 28, 1950.

beauty of Bermuda. Martin exclaimed, “And Bermuda! We loved its warm sunshine, pink beaches, sugarloaf houses and brilliant flowers everywhere. My admiration and gratitude to everyone at Pan American for making possible the most wonderful, restful week of my life.”<sup>17</sup> Martin’s collaboration with the Bermudan band more importantly signified the possibility of travel overseas where Americans could interact with nonwhite foreigners in their natural habitat. The advertisement promised, “You’ll get a kick, just the way Mary Martin did, out of Bermuda’s Calypso singers.”

Martin encouraged American women to travel to flaunt their fashion sense and sophistication and Pan Am showcased Martin as a cultural intermediary between the United States and exotic destinations like Bermuda. The Pan Am advertisement painted Bermuda as a tropical paradise and exoticized its inhabitants as eager caterers to an American traveler in Bermuda. Both Pan Am advertisements exemplified Mary Martin’s effectiveness as a symbol of cultural exchange abroad and the Bermuda advertisement more importantly depicted her upper-handed position as a white American over nonwhite people who celebrated her mere presence. These advertisements from the 1950s foreshadowed Martin’s role as a political weapon during the Vietnam War.

In April 1965 Martin embarked on a sold-out, North American tour of David Merrick’s production of *Hello, Dolly!*, an American musical about an 1890s widowed matchmaker who unites singles in marriage and seduces a wealthy businessman to secure her own remarriage. Martin’s tour of Vietnam mirrored her Pan Am advertisement because the State Department positioned her as a white savior on a humanitarian mission to “save” the South Vietnamese from the onslaught of Communist influence from North

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Vietnam. Following a profitable tour of Asia, *Hello, Dolly!* played several military bases in South Vietnam and became the first Broadway musical to play in an active combat zone.<sup>18</sup>

Martin's appointment as a US cultural ambassador signified her appeal as a representative of American cultural outreach to Asia and the US war effort in Vietnam. In the fall of 1965, *Hello, Dolly!* played in Tokyo and Martin connected with Japanese audiences and helped popularize the American musical in postwar Japan. Theater historian Stephen Henderson credits the emergence of American musical theater in Japan with Japan's gradual embrace of American cultural forms. Henderson reveals that American musicals are a staple form of the entertainment industry in Japan today. Henderson notes, "Nowadays, curtains in Japan are less likely to be raised on time-honored performances of Kabuki or Bunraku than revivals of shows like *La Cage*" [Aux Folles].<sup>19</sup> During Martin's tour of *Hello, Dolly!* in Japan in 1965, Japanese audiences praised Martin's performances. A 1966 televised documentary about her trip to Japan showed that Martin commended the Japanese for their hospitality and charming local customs. This documentary celebrated Martin as an ambassador that established a fan base for the American musical genre and American culture more broadly in Japan.

President Johnson funded Merrick's Asian tour of *Hello, Dolly!* at a cost of \$250,000 US dollars to help the United States win friends in Tokyo.<sup>20</sup> Mary Martin raved about her encounters with the Japanese. In 1977 Martin wrote that her time in

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<sup>18</sup> "Gen Westmoreland Thanks 'Hello, Dolly!' Performers," *The Telegraph*, October 15, 1965, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Henderson, "Annie Get Your Shogun," *American Theater* 15 (1998): 1.

<sup>20</sup> Rafael Steinberg, "Dolly Wows Japan," *The Calgary Herald*, October 9, 1965, 21.

Tokyo was “one of the warmest, most lovely experiences of my life.” Martin implied that she became an instant celebrity in Japan with the success of *Hello, Dolly!* Martin recalled that she “had to make a curtain speech almost every night, and even after the audience waited outside for thirty minutes, an hour, to call *arrigato*, thank you.” Martin learned to identify herself as “Dorry-san in Japanese, their pronunciation of ‘Dolly’ plus the charming, honorific san.”<sup>21</sup> In the vein of Martin’s Pan Am advertisements, her publicized tour of Japan depicted the Japanese as eager consumers of American culture who worship American celebrities. This cultural encounter mocked the Japanese and suggests that the United States thought that they were ignorant children who could be easily influenced by the power of American showmanship.

In the 1966 documentary “Mary Martin, Hello Dolly ‘Round the World,” Martin narrated footage of her personal encounters with Japanese audiences and fans during her trip to Tokyo in 1965. Martin explained, “*Hello, Dolly!* was chosen by the State Department to represent our country abroad, not only because it is the great musical hit, but because its vitality and sprawling good humor are so typical of home. And yet so universal.”<sup>22</sup> Martin described *Hello, Dolly!* as a universally appealing show that connected with Japanese audiences even though its themes remained culturally specific to America’s pastime. *Hello, Dolly!* celebrated the American cultural nostalgia that surrounded the early period of Ragtime in New York. The show’s setting is a loosely defined “Main Street USA” in late nineteenth-century New York where women are empowered by their relationships to male suiters and they do not challenge their domestic

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<sup>21</sup> Mary Martin, *My Heart Belongs* (New York: Quill, 1984), 268.

<sup>22</sup> “Mary Martin in Japan” accessed May 8, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOs7YHUiZ0>.

roles in society. *Hello, Dolly!* forced this cultural message onto the Japanese in a decisive postwar setting. *Hello, Dolly!* signified both nostalgia and a hegemonic, Western message that presented a constructed universality among the two nations through song and dance. Merrick and Martin implanted Main Street USA sensitivity in Tokyo that made the Japanese feel like the song and dance routines of 1890s Yonkers, New York could just as easily be accepted as a Japanese national pastime.

“Mary Martin, Hello Dolly ‘Round the World’” aired in the United States as a testament to *Hello, Dolly!*’s success as a Cold War project in Japan. Furthermore, Martin echoed the legacy of American missionary women in China and Korea and women’s rights workers in the Philippines because she interacted with Asian nationals in their native lands. Martin performed an American agenda of women involved in women’s work (in the case of *Hello, Dolly!*, matchmaking) onstage and promoted a gendered agenda in her public relations work offstage. Martin presented herself as a loving and motherly teacher when she visited a Japanese primary school class. A play on Martin’s role as the governess Maria Von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*, the documentary depicted Martin as a teacher to Japanese schoolchildren as she engaged the students in a sing-a-long of “Doe a Deer” from *The Sound of Music*.<sup>23</sup> “Mary Martin, Hello Dolly ‘Round the World’” presented Martin as an unthreatening yet effective ambassador to the Japanese because she did not force the Japanese to embrace Western cultural forms with guns and bombs.

Martin played the part of the American Orientalist in Japan. She expressed an affinity for Asian motifs like kimonos and silk prints yet she simultaneously belittled the

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<sup>23</sup> “Mary Martin in Japan.”



Japanese through the use of racist puns. Martin teased that she had “Madame Butterflies” before a performance of *Hello, Dolly!*<sup>24</sup> She also posed for cameras while she fed a pond full of koi fish.<sup>25</sup> Martin delighted Asian children with American show tunes, she earned endless rounds of applause in the Tokyo theater circuit, she courted Japanese politicians at events, and she helped usher in the era of American culture in Japan.

On the one hand, “Dorrry-san” portrayed herself as an elegant entertainer, a friendly American tourist, and a consumer of Japanese material goods. On the other hand, her trip to Japan represented a more sinister missionizing effort. Although the Japanese likely celebrated Martin’s embrace of Japanese culture, Martin and the United States held the upper hand in this cultural exchange because they helped dictate the course of the entertainment industry in Japan. Martin and the cast of *Hello, Dolly!* converted the Japanese entertainment industry to the American musical. As Stephen Henderson revealed, the proliferation of the American musical in Japan proves that the constructed universality of American cultural values remains alive and well in Japan. Mary Martin’s tour of Japan was an imperialist campaign in both its design and execution because she helped manipulate the Japanese to embrace American culture. She taught the Japanese how their women should act, how their children should be educated, and how they should spend their money. Martin’s interactions with the Japanese implied that they are impressionable and easy to control. Mary Martin ultimately proved useful as political leverage during the Vietnam War when the show’s cast relocated to South Vietnam.

The Soviet Union, not Asia, started out as the chosen site for *Hello, Dolly!* performances. The Soviet Union disapproved of US involvement in the Vietnam War

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<sup>24</sup> Martin, *My Heart Belongs*, 268.

<sup>25</sup> “Mary Martin in Japan.”

and accordingly refused to permit *Hello, Dolly!* to extend the next leg of its international tour in the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup> Producer David Merrick convinced President Johnson to relocate the show to South Vietnam instead. Johnson's presidential campaign election song was none other than "Hello, Lyndon!" so he did not hesitate to back this historic endeavor to bring a full Broadway musical to a war zone.

Mary Martin and her cast-mates initially did not support this decision. In her memoir, Martin recounted a roundtable discussion between herself and the *Hello, Dolly!* cast and claimed that out of the entire cast, "Two people were willing to go, but the majority refused. The cast met and voted not to go to Vietnam, because they disapproved of the war." Martin struggled to reconcile her antiwar stance with her support of American troops and South Vietnamese civilians. Martin told her cast-mates that she "Disapproved of the war. But that didn't mean disapproval of all the Americans who had been sent there." Martin also commented that she "felt dreadful about all of it, but I told them if nobody else would go, I would." Martin later "questioned her own presence" in Vietnam.<sup>27</sup>

Martin's postwar reflections in the late 1970s possibly clouded her memory of her antiwar stance because of the ambiguity of the war's outcome and its unpopular legacy. Martin's disapproval of American involvement in the Vietnam War now seems unusual because she disapproved of the war in its earliest stages before any significant antiwar movement in the United States emerged. Martin wrote, "Our happy company was at odds; I never had felt before any antagonism with either a company or with the press."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> "Call on Dolly," 3.

<sup>27</sup> Martin, *My Heart Belongs*, 273.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 274.

Martin's observation indicated that she was not accustomed to political controversy in the theater business. Travel to an active warzone challenged her own experiences as a sheltered American performer and tested her limits in terms of what were and were not safe places for Americans to travel abroad.

The State Department funded *Dolly!*'s tour of Asia in the vein of the U.S.O. camp show tradition. U.S.O. Camp Shows, Inc. established the U.S.O. variety show format in 1941 to entertain American troops during WWII.<sup>29</sup> Many troops stationed abroad during World War II and the Korean War accessed first-rate variety shows through the U.S.O. Comedian and actor Bob Hope became the top-billed, male U.S.O. entertainer. Bob Hope and Mary Martin both represented the United States onstage in the early stages of US involvement in the Vietnam War. A Virginia-based newspaper reported in 1966 that "When the United States sets out to establish freedom in the jungles and rice paddies of Asia, it does more than send in troops, bombers and Bob Hope." In an effort to promote the "American way of life," the State Department sent "teachers, doctors, Bob Hope, engineers, Miss USA, scientists, Mary Martin in 'Hello, Dolly!,' and films of the World Series"<sup>30</sup> to Asia during the Cold War. Bob Hope represented an American patriot who entertained US troops from World War II to the Vietnam War and represented the ideal male patriot and entertainer in an international warzone.

Mary Martin became Hope's female counterpart during the Vietnam War. Although Martin was not billed directly by the U.S.O., she embodied the traditions of U.S.O. performers through her role as a mistress of ceremonies who comforted and

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<sup>29</sup> "History" accessed May 8, 2013, <https://www.USO.org/history.aspx>.

<sup>30</sup> Charles McDowell, "A Way of Life for Viet Nam," *The Free Lance Star*, February 2, 1966, 4.

entertained US troops in a warzone and gave them a temporary distraction from the hardships of war. Whereas Bob Hope told jokes and served as “the funny guy next door” in his U.S.O. role, Mary Martin delivered a dose of motherly, Southern charm to young, white men stationed far away from home who needed an emotional uplift. During World War II, the singing trio The Andrews Sisters entertained US troops and gave them access to the often inaccessible American girls-next-door during the war. Younger, more provocative starlets like Raquel Welch and Ann-Margret provided a similar service to troops in Vietnam. Mary Martin delivered a mother’s touch to troops in Vietnam and the State Department’s financial backing of Martin indicated that Martin met the criteria of who and what female U.S.O. entertainers should be.

Cultural historian Penny M. Von Eschen’s work on Cold War era US jazz tours through the Middle East, Africa, and Asia emphasizes the importance of entertainment in Cold War globalization. Von Eschen situates the post-WWII period through the 1960s as a critical moment for US imperialism and the creation of the United States as a world power. Von Eschen argues, “This emphasis on positive global connections versus the ominous connotations of containment was critical in forging domestic support for the ambitious global agendas of the American Century.”<sup>31</sup> Postwar jazz tours promoted black musicians like Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie as global US ambassadors that represented “the American way of life.”<sup>32</sup> Amid ongoing racial struggles in the United States, Armstrong and Gillespie helped redefine the United States as a seemingly racially diverse, artistically progressive, and modern nation.

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<sup>31</sup> Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 28.

<sup>32</sup> Von Eschen, 7.

Mary Martin's tour of Asia resembled the jazz tours because even though she did not travel to Asia under the official banner of the U.S.O., she promoted American imperialism under the guise of humanitarianism and a movement to reach across the race line. Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie played the Middle East, Africa, and Asia to show that African Americans played an important role in international affairs to change global opinions about the United States and cover up the American legacy of racial prejudice. Mary Martin functioned similarly through her friendly outreach to Asian nationals because she helped disguise US policies of racial prejudice and military aggression abroad to repurpose them for US political and territorial gains.

*Hello, Dolly!* played eleven performances in Saigon at the Bien Hoa Airbase and at the Nha Trang base in South Vietnam in October, 1965. *Life* magazine devoted its October 22, 1965 issue to Martin's tour of Vietnam (Figure 4) where Martin stood onstage before hundreds of attentive troops.<sup>33</sup> Amidst an actual Viet Cong attack against the stage crew at one performance, *Hello, Dolly!* successfully entertained thousands of US troops, military personnel, and South Vietnamese civilians.<sup>34</sup> The show opened to the "biggest audience in its two-year history" with an estimated 7,000 audience members at its performance at the Tan Son Nhu airport.<sup>35</sup> Martin entertained US troops onstage and courted United States and South Vietnamese diplomats in public engagements offstage. Martin appeared at several US public relations events that included a welcoming party for the *Hello Dolly!* cast where she served as US Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge's date.

Martin also posed for pictures with South Vietnamese civilians throughout

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<sup>33</sup> "Mary Martin in Vietnam," *Life*, October 22, 1965.

<sup>34</sup> Shana Alexander, "Broadway show in a theater of war," *Life*, October 22, 1965.

<sup>35</sup> "Dolly Crew Fired On," *The Spokesman Review*, October 13, 1965, 22.



Figure 4. “*Mary Martin in Vietnam.*” US troops stationed at the Nha Trang Air Base in South Vietnam squatted on sandbags in a makeshift theater to catch a real Broadway show, *Life*, October 22, 1965.

Saigon. In a photograph included in her memoir, Martin knelt to greet a young Vietnamese child in the streets of Saigon as cameramen documented the encounter (Figure 5). Dressed in a white evening dress and pumps, this photograph represented Martin as a gracious intermediary between the United States and South Vietnam. Martin emerged as a symbol of American generosity and kindness to the South Vietnamese because she connected with their children, praised their culture, and helped instill American values in South Vietnam through her performances and one-on-one encounters with the South Vietnamese. Martin became a Goodwill Ambassador to the South Vietnamese and “planted a happy tree in front of the Vietnamese American Association building as an expression of friendship” to the delight of pro-war journalists who documented the event.<sup>36</sup> Martin held a position of white power over the South Vietnamese because she dictated their political and military agenda by manipulating them through orchestrated acts of kindness.

Similar to her diplomatic work in Japan, Mary Martin became an effective tool of cultural diplomacy in South Vietnam because she was an unthreatening and motherly white woman who helped secure Japanese and South Vietnamese admiration for the United States. Martin’s pose with the Vietnamese child sentimentalized her commitment to the United States’ war to defend the South Vietnamese against the Communist North Vietnamese. Martin presented South Vietnamese civilians and political figureheads as fans of both Martin and, more importantly, US occupation of South Vietnam. America’s Broadway darling publicly appeared to support US involvement in the Vietnam War which helped boost troop morale, but it more importantly sent a message back home to

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<sup>36</sup> “Hello, Dolly Plays to 7,000 in Saigon,” *Sarasota Journal*, October 11, 1965, 2.



Figure 5. Mary meets Vietnamese child. Mary Martin knelt to greet a Vietnamese child on the streets of Saigon as photographers captured Martin's gesture, *My Heart Belongs*.



the United States that Mary Martin had the diplomatic bases covered.

On October 8, 1965 Mary Martin arrived at the Bien Hoa Air Base in South Vietnam to a welcome committee that gave her a tour of the base and firsthand insight into the mechanics of the war. In a letter drafted on October 10, 1965 by Army Surgeon Dr. Calvin Chapman to his parents back in the United States, Dr. Chapman's impression of Martin as the ideal American woman emerged. Dr. Chapman's letter home testified to Martin's effectiveness as a beloved performer and an effective boost to troop morale during the war. In a glowing review of Martin's performance, Dr. Chapman wrote that Martin "proved by her outstanding performance that she's one of the real greats in showbiz. Her voice is still wonderful, and she commands the stage at all times." Dr. Chapman noted that Martin addressed troops by their first names and repeatedly shouted "God Bless Y'all" at the end of the performance.<sup>37</sup> He wrote, "As a curtain call, Mary Martin did the *Hello, Dolly!* theme song using the names of Air Force and Army colonels and little personal bits about them" where the GIs both "cried and went wild with excitement" that a celebrity called them out by name.<sup>38</sup> Chapman's glowing review of Martin's performance in *Hello, Dolly!* offered key insight into how an Air Force doctor interpreted Martin's performance as a patriotic female celebrity who altered her performances to personally address and bless the troops. Dr. Chapman revealed that US troops reacted "wildly" to Martin's personal overtures and indicated that her performances overwhelmingly pleased the troops and brought them to tears. In 1965 American troops did not publicly disapprove of the war and seemed to genuinely

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<sup>37</sup> Letter to Family, 10 October 1965, Calvin Chapman Collection, Folder 08, Box 01, The Vietnam Center and Archives, Texas Tech University.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

appreciate U.S.O. shows and Martin's performance in *Hello, Dolly!* Dr. Chapman's letter testified to troops' attitudes towards wartime entertainment and morale during the early stages of the war.

At its core, Dr. Chapman's letter home evaluated Martin as a successful U.S.O. type of performer in an active war zone where troops relied on performers to entertain and uplift them under dangerous conditions. Mary Martin was the ideal female stage performer in the Vietnam War because she delivered a nostalgic performance about the simpler times of 1890s America where beautiful dames charmed male admirers through song, dance, and bedazzled gowns. Widowed Dolly Levi represents the quintessential patriotic woman because she tries to reenter the institution of heterosexual marriage and in the process charms practically every man she encounters in the musical and on a military base in Vietnam. Martin played a real life matchmaker when she reunited a seventeen-year-old *Hello, Dolly!* dancer with her wounded Marine boyfriend onstage after a performance. The media capitalized on this incident to help paint a sentimentalized picture of a more lighthearted wartime moment. Media reports substituted the show's title from *Hello, Dolly!* to *Romeo and Juliet* as Martin's matchmaking talent received widespread praise.<sup>39</sup>

While Martin emerged from her trip to South Vietnam as a patriotic symbol of the war effort and an advocate for US soldiers, her observations of the warzone counteracted the *Hello, Dolly!* troops' efforts to bridge the cultural divide. During her time in South Vietnam, Martin wrote in her memoir that she constantly noticed "unbelievable, horrible things" like bombed streets in Saigon, attacks on her stage crew, and fearful South

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<sup>39</sup> "Hello, Dolly Also Romeo and Juliet," *St. Petersburg Times*, October 11, 1965, 4.

Vietnamese civilians. Martin wrote, “We arranged to give one performance in Saigon for the civilians. They were almost afraid to come into the theater for fear it would be destroyed while they were inside.”<sup>40</sup> At the time, Martin never criticized US troops and did not directly condemn US policymakers. Yet in spite of seemingly positive exchanges between Martin and the South Vietnamese, the United States did not hold the same influence over Vietnam as they did in Japan. The United States never asserted substantial economic, political, and ideological influence in South Vietnam and the South Vietnamese did not popularize the American Broadway musical. Martin’s gushing account of *Hello Dolly’s!* influence over the Japanese and silence about South Vietnam suggest a failed attempt to impose cultural exchange in Vietnam.

Regardless of her opposition to the war, Mary Martin nonetheless consented to travel to South Vietnam as one of the many paid, public faces sent to entertain US troops and represent American cultural values to South Vietnamese allies. In the Vietnam War’s earliest stages in 1965, Martin represented a patriotic American entertainer who put personal politics aside to perform American musical theater’s most old-fashioned female role for adoring male spectators. *Hello, Dolly!* delivered Main Street USA sentimentality to Asia during decisive stages of the Cold War. The State Department constructed Martin as an American patriot and the ideal, traditional woman to secure Cold War alliances with charm as opposed to brute military force. She showed the South Vietnamese that white Americans wanted to befriend rather than colonize their neighbors in Asia. President Johnson recruited a married, fifty-three year old woman famous for playing step-moms and reformed tomboys to spread the American social gospel to people

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<sup>40</sup> Martin, *My Heart Belongs*, 277.

believed to be on the verge of adopting Communist political institutions. Johnson did not ask more marketable and attractive starlets like Jane Fonda who played prostitutes and seductresses in films to carry out this political agenda to spread US cultural values abroad. Martin's public persona embodied the unthreatening, apolitical, heteronormative, and domestic qualities that American women must convey to the United States' nonwhite enemies, victims, and allies.

## CHAPTER 3

### SEE JANE PROTEST: JANE FONDA, ANTIWAR FEMINISM, AND GENDER BETRAYAL IN NORTH VIETNAM

Actress and anti-Vietnam War activist Jane Fonda appeared on *The Donahue Show* in September 1972 to explain her antiwar activist agenda and reclaim her public image. At the time, Fonda was perhaps the most famous American antiwar activist and she wanted a platform to explain why she believed that the war was wrong. Presented as a radical in the media for her involvement in the GI and Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) movements and her widely publicized trip to Hanoi, Fonda's appearance on *The Donahue Show* underlined the American public's enduring distaste for her politics and personal demeanor as a celebrity war critic. Audience members and home viewers watched Fonda account for her position against the Nixon Administration's policies in Vietnam and her efforts to educate herself about the facts. Fonda carefully outlined her political stance against the war and her personal determination to help end it.

Donahue's viewers verbally attacked Fonda for her naiveté and socioeconomic privilege. Fonda's critics consisted primarily of women who painted Fonda as a talkative know-it-all who could outline some of the war's failings but who had no business to publicly condemn the war because of her youth and privilege as a rich actress. One female viewer called in to the program and asked Fonda, "Is it any wonder that you

create an emotional shockwave when you present this kind of public posture?”<sup>41</sup> This statement best encapsulated the gendered attack on Fonda’s antiwar activism. It spoke to the American public’s resentment towards a young woman who educated herself about politics and sacrificed her public image to act on her personal politics and denounce the war. Donahue attempted to explain and legitimize American women’s contempt for her and suggested, “Let’s consider the emotional position of a woman who has lost a son in Vietnam” in order to empathize with viewers’ frustration and anger.<sup>42</sup> He felt that Fonda salted the wounds of Americans who had real stakes in the war and its outcome.

Donahue’s effort to comfort soldiers’ mothers merely perpetuated the sexist anti-Fonda agenda. The verbal assaults launched at Fonda on the show indicate that the American public had a clear distaste for young women engaged in politics, especially since they assumed that women had no place as war critics if they seemingly had nothing to lose.

Fonda, according to Donahue’s viewers, not only betrayed her country and her identity as an American to combat US military policies in Vietnam, but she betrayed the establishment that funded her lifestyle and created her identity as a privileged actress. One male home viewer attacked Fonda as a traitor to the United States because she traveled to enemy territory and did not appreciate the Hollywood film industry that made her a rich celebrity. The male viewer asked Donahue, “Why is it that when the establishment has been so good to this girl, that she has turned pro-Communist? If she doesn’t like it here I believe that she should go side with all of those people and cohabit

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<sup>41</sup> “Jane Fonda Interview 1972 (Part 1 of 5)” accessed October 15, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHFWzcwkfS4>.

<sup>42</sup> “Jane Fonda Interview 1972 (Part 2 of 5)” accessed October 15, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaxJbz53Lto>.

with them.”<sup>43</sup> Donahue’s male viewer could not understand why Fonda gave up a cushy lifestyle for politics because it is presumed to be an unnatural line of business for women. Fonda’s political activism created an “emotional shockwave” in America because she violated her privileges as an actress and her privileges as a woman, which many Americans likely resented regardless of Fonda’s involvement in the antiwar movement.

Jane Fonda’s appearance on *The Donahue Show* in September 1972 signified the inhospitable reception she received for her activism. Fonda became the most visible female antiwar activist of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Americans rejected and mocked her transition from sexy Hollywood actress to radical political activist. As a female performer known for her iconic film roles as prostitutes and loose women, Fonda’s abandonment of her sex kitten public image and adoption of masculinized political activism marked her as a traitor. She became a traitor to her socially prescribed gender role and a warning to women who sought to challenge women’s roles during a costly and controversial war. Fonda wanted women to educate themselves about US foreign policy and hold the US government accountable for corrupt military policies in Southeast Asia. She wanted women to be more vocal about politics and be accountable for social change. Fonda’s legacy contrasts with Mary Martin’s because she was a white woman who bucked traditional American values and urged the Vietnamese to defend their culture and combat American interests in their native lands.

Branded the female icon of the antiwar movement and burgeoning feminist movement, Fonda represented the antithesis to Mary Martin and challenged the trajectory of matronly female roles as nurses, missionaries, teachers, and charity workers who

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<sup>43</sup> “Jane Fonda Interview 1972 (Part 1 of 5).”

traveled to Asia from the mid-nineteenth century through the Cold War era. As a political activist who questioned US colonial authority in Southeast Asia, abandoned her sex symbol identity, and presented herself as an informed authority on political revolution, Fonda alarmed Donahue's viewers because she defied traditional logic about US women's domestic gender roles and public representation of US values overseas. Fonda's criticism of the war and trip to Hanoi worked against this imperialist project and made her a very dangerous public figure because she advocated for Vietnamese independence and critiqued the whitening process of American imperialism.

Jane Fonda became a celebrity at birth because she is actor Henry Fonda's daughter. The media groomed Fonda to be a public woman who followed in her father's footsteps and pursued an acting career. In 1959 Fonda began a modeling career to support herself financially and pay for acting classes. Fonda modeled for *Life*, *Esquire*, *Harper's Bazar*, *Look*, *Vogue*, and *Ladies Home Journal* from 1959 to 1960 and established a public persona as a demure young woman with upper-class taste.<sup>44</sup> In the early 1960s, Fonda's acting credits included *There Was a Little Girl* on Broadway and the film *Tall Story* where she played a 1950s cheerleader.<sup>45</sup> Jane Fonda transitioned from a cute child to beautiful actress in the public eye that monitored and invested in her coming of age.

Fonda gradually shifted into sexier, more adult film roles in the mid-1960s and even posed for *Penthouse Magazine* and *Playboy Magazine* which cemented her status as a Hollywood sex symbol (Figure 6). Jane Fonda appeared on the cover of *Penthouse Magazine* in 1968 to promote her science fiction, soft-core porn film *Barbarella* based on

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<sup>44</sup> Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far* (New York: Random House, 2006), 116.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 128.





Figure 6. “Jane Fonda Is Barbarella in...the Kinkiest Film of the Year.” Jane Fonda emerged as a futuristic sex symbol in 1968’s science fiction fantasy film *Barbarella* and flashed her not-so-secret weapon on the cover of *Penthouse*, Penthouse, 1968.

the popular French comic strip. Fonda's right breast drew immediate attention as the focus of the magazine's cover and revealed a more risqué side to Fonda's modeling and film career. The *Penthouse* cover read, "Jane Fonda is Barbarella in...the Kinkiest Film of the Year."<sup>46</sup> The cover picture's depiction of Fonda in a reptile-skin corset with a see-through breast cover displayed her as a sex symbol. Although Fonda later denied culpability for the creation of her sex symbol identity, she did choose similar roles that typecast her and limited the American peoples' understanding of her acting range.

Fonda also controlled her appearance as a femininely dressed woman who wore short skirts and long hair. She elected the comportment of a sex symbol because she presented herself as an actress limited to prostitute roles, provocative clothes, and passivity around men. Prior to *Barbarella*'s release, Fonda and her husband, *Barbarella* director Roger Vadim, appeared on *The Merv Griffin Show* in 1967 to promote a film they worked on together. Their appearance on the program simultaneously promoted Fonda as a passive wife who let her husband answer Griffin's questions and let Griffin evaluate her as a sexy actress. Clad in a miniskirt, Fonda played the part of a provocatively dressed screen siren and Griffin's audience laughed when Fonda jokingly admitted that it was "a typical outfit to catch planes in" to suggest that miniskirts were everyday attire for actresses.<sup>47</sup> The *Merv Griffin Show* appearance sent a signal to American viewers that Jane Fonda let her husband speak for her and she had value in physical appearance alone.

Fonda's role as Barbarella served as a catchall for her other film roles in the mid-

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<sup>46</sup> *Penthouse Magazine*, vol.3, no.4, 1968.

<sup>47</sup> "Jane Fonda & Roger Vadim Interview" accessed April 1, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16B39QqVEXg>.

1960s through the early 1970s as an outlaw cowgirl in *Cat Ballou*, a thief and a prostitute in *Walk on the Wild Side*, and a troubled call-girl in *Klute*, where she won the Academy Award for Best Actress in 1972. In her study of the history of American women's roles in the media and the way women's lives are generationally influenced by gender roles in the media, Susan J. Douglas argues, "The prize role[s] for women were Jane Fonda as the prostitute in *Klute*" in the early 1970s.<sup>48</sup> By 1970, Jane Fonda was America's favorite film whore and she won an Oscar for it. Americans trademarked Jane Fonda for her *Penthouse* magazine nipple-shot, her talk-show appearances as a hotshot French director's submissive wife, and her repertoire of scandalous film characters. Fonda's turn to antiwar, civil rights, and feminist activism in the early 1970s cast Fonda in a contradictory, dual light that challenged her sex symbol status and made her activism an uncomfortable associative shift for American spectators and loyal fans.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Fonda made a conscious decision to immerse herself in the civil rights and Black Panther movements, the antiwar movement, and the emerging feminist movement. In her 2006 memoir, *My Life So Far*, Fonda wrote, "The activism upon which I embarked in 1970 changed me forever in terms of how I saw the world and my place in it."<sup>49</sup> After living in France with Vadim and during several film shoots from 1963 to 1969, Fonda had little personal exposure to the US civil rights and antiwar movements.<sup>50</sup> After she recovered from a miscarriage in France in 1968, Fonda read extensively about Vietnamese history, watched French news coverage of the ill-fated

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<sup>48</sup> Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1994), 201.

<sup>49</sup> Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far*, 227.

<sup>50</sup> Barbara Hersberger, *Jane Fonda's War: A Political Biography of an Antiwar Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2005).

Tet Offensive, and attended Parisian antiwar rallies.<sup>51</sup> Fonda met a US serviceman at a dinner party in France who opposed the war and convinced Fonda to read Jonathan Schell's *The Village of Ben Suc*. She hoped to educate herself about Vietnam and adopt a sense of political responsibility while living in France as a rich expatriate. Fonda's discussion of her political revelations showed that she made a conscious decision to give up the selfish lifestyle of an actress living abroad and to participate in social movements back in the United States.

Schell's book ignited Jane's activist spirit. After reading his book, Fonda wrote, "I felt sickened. Part of my identity had been that I was a citizen of a country that, in spite of its internal paradoxes, represented moral integrity, justice, and a desire for peace."<sup>52</sup> As an expatriate who viewed her country through an outsider's lens, Fonda witnessed a chain of connected movements that emerged in the United States in the late 1960s. She ultimately gave up her successful career and public reputation as a sex symbol to combat social inequalities and an imperialist war from within the ranks of radical political movements in the United States. Unable to locate Vietnam on a map until 1968, Fonda ignored politics under the veil of a movie star lifestyle and her eventual emergence as a political activist juxtaposed two stages of her public identity much to the discomfort of many Americans.

In the late 1960s Jane Fonda immersed herself in various civil rights movements in the United States. In 1968 and 1969 Jane Fonda allied herself with the Native American rights movement centered on protest marches in and around San Francisco's Alcatraz prison facility. She also participated in the Black Power movement and the

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<sup>51</sup> Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far*, 194.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 196.

Black Panther Party's "Free Breakfast Program." Fonda marched alongside Cherokee activist Wilma Mankiller where she faced her first arrest. She later earned her first FBI file through her efforts to raise bail money for her jailed Black Panther friends.<sup>53</sup> Fonda's reading of journalist Alex Haley's 1965 bestseller *The Autobiography of Malcom X* transformed Fonda's thinking about racial and class inequalities in the United States. Although Fonda's participation in Native American and Black Power activism did not extend beyond fundraising, her investigation of civil rights issues led her to explore GI coffeehouse culture and the growing antiwar movement throughout the United States.

Fonda's race and class consciousness expanded through her involvement in civil rights activism and she identified the GI movement as an extension of this battle. Fonda wrote:

While the civilian anti-war movement was primarily white and middle-class, the GI movement was made up of working-class kids, sons and daughters of farmers and hard hats, kids who couldn't afford college deferments, and a preponderance of rural and urban poor, particularly blacks and Latinos.<sup>54</sup>

Fonda allied herself primarily with GIs throughout her involvement in the antiwar movement because she wanted to be an advocate for their rights the same way she wanted to be an advocate for Native Americans and African Americans in the civil rights movement.

In Vietnam War historian Christian G. Appy's 1993 study of the class and racial stratification of the Vietnam War, *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers & Vietnam*, Appy argues that class ultimately determined the recruitment of American troops. Appy contends that as the American war in Vietnam progressed as an

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 222.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 223.

increasingly unfavorable war, the military drafted working-class men. Fonda recognized that the civil rights battle extended to the Vietnam War and she worked to raise money for GI coffeehouses where she spoke with GIs, veterans, and antiwar activists about their rights in the military, their regrets about their actions in combat, and their rights once they returned home.<sup>55</sup> Fonda publicly allied herself with a movement constructed largely of working-class participants and this in part represented a betrayal of her privileged upbringing.

The coffeehouse movement emerged when the Army denied GIs the right to meet on-base to debate their feelings about the war in a communal setting.<sup>56</sup> GIs and antiwar activists frequented off-base coffeehouses owned by veterans and civilians. According to Fonda biographer Mary Hersberger, Fonda's involvement with the GI movement began when she helped fund the United States Servicemen's Fund which sponsored the coffeehouse movement. Fonda was a full-time supporter of the GI movement in the mid-1970s where she "attended antiwar events at churches, on university campuses, and at GI coffeehouses."<sup>57</sup> In 1970, Fonda raised \$50,000 to help establish the GI office.<sup>58</sup> Fonda eventually collaborated with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, which consisted of thousands of Vietnam veterans who opposed the war and made Fonda the poster woman for GI rights.<sup>59</sup> Fonda explained, "GIs began to organize, not just around the growing antiwar sentiment in the military ranks, but in response to the undemocratic nature of the

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<sup>55</sup> Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far*, 223.

<sup>56</sup> Barbara Hersberger, *Jane Fonda's War*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 8-9.

<sup>58</sup> Mary Hersberger, *Jane Fonda's War*, 21.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 21-29.

military system itself.”<sup>60</sup> At GI coffeehouses, Fonda sat cross-legged on the floor among fellow antiwar activists from different class and racial backgrounds. Fonda risked arrest at one on-base event when GIs smuggled her through a checkpoint in the trunk of a car.<sup>61</sup> Fonda’s appearances at GI coffeehouses and tireless campaigns to fund and publicize GI and VVAW events gradually led to public speaking events at universities where she used her celebrity status to give a voice to the men and women impacted by the war. Fonda put her money where her mouth was and financially backed GIs to support, rather than sabotage them, as Fonda’s eventual legacy as an antiwar activist suggests.

As Fonda repeatedly acknowledged in her memoir and personal interviews, many Americans struggled to balance their perceptions of Fonda as *Barbarella*, the seductive space explorer on film, with her adoption of civil rights and antiwar activism where she traded her fleshy space corset for old jeans and sweaters. Fonda’s activism signaled a complete change for Fonda’s public image and demeanor as a celebrity that Americans followed since her childhood in front of the camera. Fonda wrote:

I made it easy for the media and others to choose a dubious if not downright hostile lens through which to view me. There I was upon my soap box, pronouncing myself a ‘revolutionary woman,’ while *Barbarella* had just played in a theater around the corner.<sup>62</sup>

The disconnect between Americans’ perceptions of *Barbarella* Jane and activist Jane likely prevented Americans from noticing Fonda’s advocacy for GIs. Fonda’s gendered betrayal outshone her patriotic contributions to servicemen.

From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, Fonda transitioned from American sex symbol to American political radical and signified a broader transition of gender roles for

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<sup>60</sup> Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far*, 224.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 238.

<sup>62</sup> Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far*, 227.

women at the height of the feminist movement in this period. Fonda represented a convenient target for many Americans' rejection of women's increasing roles as war opponents and advocates of equal rights legislation. Ruth Rosen's work on the women's movement articulates the interconnection between the women's movement of the 1960s and 70s and the antiwar movement. She argues that the antiwar counterculture helped challenge traditional gender roles for men and women.<sup>63</sup> Hippies generated criticism targeted at American youth because they defied gender roles through physical appearance. Young men wore their hair long and became indistinguishable from women. Women wore longer, flowing dresses and bell bottom jeans that concealed their feminine shapes. Fonda's adoption of more masculine clothing like jeans and sweaters that better suited her travel schedule and professional engagements cast her as just another hippie woman who disregarded personal appearance and her feminine gender role. Jane Fonda signaled the dangers of gender bending through her antiwar activism and association with hippies and her gendered deviance functioned as a useful target to criticize antiwar radicalism and the emergence of feminism.

Jane Fonda's infamy as an antiwar activist escalated on November 2, 1970 when Airport security arrested her for smuggling drugs into the United States from Canada and assaulting a police officer. Fonda arrived at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport from Canada to help fund the upcoming Winter Soldier Investigation in Detroit. In 2006 Fonda claimed, "Whatever controversy I had experienced until then was nothing compared with what ensued."<sup>64</sup> After midnight Fonda reentered the United States and

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<sup>63</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 124.

<sup>64</sup> Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far*, 261.



customs officials searched her suitcase and purse and seized plastic vials of vitamins labeled B, L, and D for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, her address book, and all of her personal documents. Fonda spent the next three hours detained in the customs office and officials denied her the right to call her lawyer or take a bathroom break after hours of travel. Once Fonda protested the bag search, the customs officials misidentified Fonda's vitamins as drugs she had smuggled in from Canada. When Fonda attempted to run to the bathroom to obtain a Tampon, she pushed aside an officer and faced arrest for assault.<sup>65</sup> Fonda recalled that when she pleaded with the officers, one agent said, "You shut up! You're in my control. You take my word for it! I'm taking orders from Washington."<sup>66</sup>

Following the altercation, officers transported Fonda to the Cuyahoga County Jail and held her for ten hours in a cell surrounded by felons and murderers. Fonda's notoriety as a controversial antiwar radical cast her as a kind of political prisoner in subsequent media reports that dramatized the incident. Fonda biographer Thomas Kiernan's 1973 account of Fonda's arrest indicated that the FBI compiled file cabinets worth of documents that deemed Fonda an enemy of the Nixon Administration and he argues that Fonda was the victim of phone bugging, surveillance, mail interception, and tax audits. Kiernan argues that the case against Fonda ended in dismissal six months later because the Pentagon did not want to reveal the government's involvement in the profiling campaign against Fonda.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> "Jane Fonda faces charge of smuggling," *Eugene Register-Guard*, November 3, 1970, 2.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Kiernan, *Jane: An Intimate Biography of Jane Fonda* (New York: G.P. Putnam Sons, 1973), 316.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 323.

One local lawyer's comments about the Fonda court proceedings encapsulated the symbolism of the Cleveland arrest for Fonda's transformation from sex symbol to political radical. Lawyer Fred Jurek stated, "I saw her in Playboy a couple of years ago. So last night I took the magazine out again to check what she really looked like. Now she's mixing with all those hippies and she don't look so good anymore."<sup>68</sup> Another Fonda critic who judged her transformation from actress to convict said, "It is easy to see Jane Fonda is no longer Cat Ballou or Barbarella. It is difficult to explain Jane Fonda. She is a woman of many personalities."<sup>69</sup> In mid-1971 the press quietly reported that Jane Fonda's alleged drugs were in fact vitamins, but the news reports that surfaced stained Fonda's reputation in the public eye.

The Cleveland arrest and its media coverage immortalized Fonda as a criminal in the press and in American cultural memory of the antiwar movement because her mug shot remains one of the most enduring symbols of Fonda's political radicalism and the antiwar movement. Fonda sported a more masculine and hardened look from her Barbarella days and displayed her black power fist as a sign of solidarity with the civil rights and antiwar movements (Figure 7). The Cleveland incident constructed Fonda as a political prisoner in the media as false and exaggerated allegations against Fonda surfaced even after the dismissal of the case. Fonda's mug shot remains an enduring rhetorical symbol of Fonda's antiwar activism and her personal character as an unpatriotic traitor to American legal and political institutions.

In the fall of 1970, Jane Fonda collaborated with a GI movement activist to create

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 317.

<sup>69</sup> "Jane's pills were really vitamins, report claims," *Ellensburg Daily Record*, May 7, 1971, 10.



Figure 7. “*Cleveland*.” Jane Fonda fist-pumped her political solidarity in the antiwar movement in her infamous 1970 mug shot for “smuggling drugs” and “assaulting a police officer” in Cleveland, *My Life So Far*.

a variety show for GIs and finally put her training as an actress to use. F.T.A., which stood for “Fuck,” or sometimes “Free” the Army, was “political vaudeville with an antiwar, pro-soldier theme” which Fonda claimed “was intended not only to support the soldiers’ antiwar sentiments but to call attention to the way soldiers were dehumanized in the military.”<sup>70</sup> Based on her conversations with GIs and veterans irritated with Bob Hope’s variety shows that had dominated the U.S.O. show circuit since World War II, Fonda recruited fellow actor Donald Sutherland, lesbian folk singer Holly Near, and other entertainers to perform a show for the troops that addressed the social injustices of the war and American culture. Thomas Kiernan notes Fonda’s fervent disapproval of Bob Hope’s legacy as a pro war entertainer and quotes Fonda, “We’re not going to do that kind of chauvinist show with topless dancers and lots of tits flying.”<sup>71</sup>

Fonda explained that *F.T.A.* did not easily materialize into a successful show and faced political barriers from inception to opening day. Fonda revealed:

From the beginning, the intention had been to try to bring the FTA show to South Vietnam as an alternative to Bob Hope’s pro-war, testosterone-driven tour. I wrote to President Nixon asking for permission to go to South Vietnam for Christmas. I wasn’t holding my breath for a Dear-Jane-sure-come-on-over-we’d-love-the-troops-to-see-you-Love-Dick letter, but I wanted to be able to say that I’d at least tried.<sup>72</sup>

While President Johnson approved Martin’s tour of Hello, Dolly! in South Vietnam, President Nixon denied Fonda the chance to take F.T.A. to Vietnam because of its

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<sup>70</sup> Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far*, 273.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Kiernan, *Jane: An Intimate Biography of Jane Fonda* (New York: G.P. Putnam Sons, 1973), 331.

<sup>72</sup> Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far*, 274.

provocative antiwar content.<sup>73</sup> The Pentagon banned the show from US military bases but the *F.T.A.* show ultimately played to over 64,000 GIs near military bases in the continental United States, Hawaii, the Philippines, and Japan.<sup>74</sup>

*F.T.A.* did not fit the mold of the U.S.O. camp show. Bob Hope's 1967 Christmas special in Pleiku exemplified the typical U.S.O. camp show fare during the Vietnam War where he told dirty jokes and put sexually provocative female singers and dancers on display for US troops. After her performance of a popular hit parade song, actress Raquel Welch accompanied Hope in a comedy routine that highlighted Welch's marketable sexuality. In video footage of the special, Welch commented, "I'm most happy to be here and see all these boys." Hope responded, "They were boys before you came out and now they're all men."<sup>75</sup> Hope pegged Welch as a rite of passage or vehicle to instant manhood that military service necessitated. Dressed in a sleeveless blouse, a miniskirt, and knee-high boots, Welch indoctrinated young men into manhood and also lent Bob Hope credibility as a pimp-like emcee who gave the troops access to idealized women.

In contrast, the film version of *F.T.A.* boasted a multiracial cast of activists, singers, poets, comedians, and actors committed to the intersecting movements of civil rights and antiwar activism. The film's audiences stationed throughout the South Pacific

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<sup>73</sup> "Anti-war Jane Fonda and friends on a tour," 27 December 1971, Douglas Pike Collection, Folder 03, Box 09, The Vietnam Center and Archives, Texas Tech University.

<sup>74</sup> "American International Pictures: Special Feature: Underground: For Immediate Release: *F.T.A.*: The Show the Pentagon Couldn't Stop- July 10, 1972," 10 July 1972, Social Movements Collection, Folder 43, Box 18, The Vietnam Center and Archives, Texas Tech University.

<sup>75</sup> "Bob Hope USO. Christmas Special (1967)" accessed May 8, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vqN5mXWHZM>.

came from equally diverse backgrounds and political viewpoints and openly critiqued the war as imperialist, sexist, and racist towards enlisted African American soldiers and women.<sup>76</sup> *F.T.A.* consisted of comedy skits that mocked US political figures like President Nixon and First Lady Pat Nixon and song and dance routines laden with explicit lyrics and vulgar gestures. Memorable *F.T.A.* songs included “My Ass is Mine” about men’s right to evade the draft and the feminist anthem “Tired of Fuckers Fucking Over Me.”<sup>77</sup> American troops and war critics appreciated and praised *F.T.A.*’s racy content because it addressed everyday concerns about inequality and discrimination in the military and the burgeoning civil rights and feminist movements.

In the musical number “Tired of Fuckers Fucking Over Me,” Jane Fonda, Holly Near, and African American actress Rita Martinson addressed sexism and presented a united and multiracial front in support of women’s rights. All four women sang in unison, “When I’m walking down the street, and every man I meet, says baby ain’t you sweet, I could scream. Well I know these guys are sick and think only of their prick, and I’m tired of bastards fucking over me.” Rita Martinson chimed in, “Oh I know that life is rough and to be a man is tough, but I have had enough and can’t ignore. That their masculinity, don’t respect my right to be, and I solemnly do swear I’m going to roar.”<sup>78</sup> The Pentagon provided no financial support for *F.T.A.* and it signaled a sharp turn from the traditional U.S.O. camp show. The content challenged American political and social institutions. *F.T.A.* challenged women’s roles as U.S.O. pin-up girls and Fonda’s role in *F.T.A.* as a critic of the U.S.O. camp show stood as the polar opposite to Mary Martin’s

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<sup>76</sup> *F.T.A.*, directed by Francine Parker (1972; Japan and the Philippines: Free Theater Associates, 2009), DVD.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

embodiment of the consummate female U.S.O. performer.

*F.T.A.* performer and lesbian folk singer Holly Near suggested that the *F.T.A.* tour did not receive government backing or funding because it was feminist in nature and critiqued the way the US government treated women and minorities within a sexist wartime regime in the United States and abroad. Near wrote in her memoir:

I thought the soldiers would object to the feminism in the show, but they related to it. They were feeling one down too, and when all four women in the show sang Beverly Grant's "Tired of Fuckers Fucking Over Me," they gave us a standing ovation.<sup>79</sup>

Near credited *F.T.A.* and her friendship with Fonda as a turning point where she adopted feminist politics that ultimately encouraged her to embrace a lesbian identity and commandeer the Women's Music Movement in the late 1970s and 1980s. *F.T.A.* signaled a split from the U.S.O. camp shows that dominated the Vietnam War and wars past because it gave female and minority performers a platform to voice their opinions about social injustice and gave US troops a platform to identify their mistreatment and speak out against an unpopular war. Near noted that "The FTA show made soldiers laugh and cry at material that objected to war, racism, and sexism."<sup>80</sup> *F.T.A.* bolstered troop morale and offered a critical analysis of masculinity and it critiqued the patriarchal underpinnings of the U.S.O.

The US State Department sent Mary Martin to South Vietnam to Americanize the South Vietnamese and deter their loyalty to the Communist North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese invited Jane Fonda to tour North Vietnam where she subsequently identified with their fight to retain national independence and combat the whitening

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<sup>79</sup> Holly Near, *Fire in the Rain...Singer in the Storm: An Autobiography* (New York: Quill, 1991), 62.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

process of American military incursion. Jane Fonda traveled to Hanoi for two weeks in 1972 to investigate the Nixon Administration's bombing campaign against the North Vietnamese and speak with American POWs imprisoned in Hanoi.<sup>81</sup> Fonda intended to photograph damage to North Vietnam's infrastructure, especially the dikes so critical to North Vietnamese agriculture. Fonda even visited the War Crimes Museum in Hanoi to acquire first-hand knowledge about American weapons and the consequences of chemical warfare on North Vietnamese civilians.<sup>82</sup> After her tour of damaged sites in Hanoi and encounters with the North Vietnamese people, Fonda spoke on Radio Hanoi to inform US troops about what she saw on the ground in Hanoi and to condemn the US bombing campaign. Fonda testified to the good-nature and resilience of the North Vietnamese. She identified with Vietnamese nationals' struggles and gambled her reputation on exposing US brutality to champion the Vietnamese.

Jane Fonda's radio broadcasts enraged many Americans who accused her of collaborating with Communist North Vietnamese forces. The photographs taken on the final day of her trip to Hanoi at the military installation site outside of Hanoi define the controversy that surrounded her trip. Fonda toured the military installation laden with weapons and an antiaircraft machine gun and ultimately sat down on a large machine gun. Fonda joined her hosts in song where they celebrated Vietnam's spirit of national independence and revolution. In the damaging image that emerged (Figure 8), Fonda's celebration through song cast her as an enthusiastic comrade of her North Vietnamese tour guides who appeared to have no grasp of the consequences of her naïve actions.

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<sup>81</sup> "Further reports on Jane Fonda's activities in DRV- July 19, 1972," Douglas Pike Collection, Folder 03, Box 09, The Vietnam Center and Archives, Texas Tech University.

<sup>82</sup> Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far*, 303.





Figure 8. Jane strikes a pose. Jane Fonda's Communist comportment in Hanoi at a military installation site, *My Life So Far*.

After the pictures emerged, Fonda publicly acknowledged that they misrepresented the situation and her intentions. Fonda contended that by 1972 Americans made frequent trips to inspect North Vietnamese military installations and the helmet she wore was a safety precaution and not for show. Fonda critics savored the opportunity to criticize her decision to strike this now famous pose and also used it as a way to vent their racist attitudes toward North Vietnamese enemy forces.

Fonda's trip to Hanoi was not out of character for Americans or American women at the time but rather routine for many tourists and activists. Critics condemn Fonda's actions as suspicious, traitorous, and an exception to wartime policy that curtailed American civilians' travel abroad. Mary Hersberger claims that "The Fonda-Vietnam connection has come to encapsulate a number of arguments about antiwar activism generally: that American citizens should never, ever travel to a country that the United States is waging a war against." Yet she reveals through her work on Vietnam War era antiwar and peace activism that Americans regularly traveled to North and South Vietnam during the war with little publicity.<sup>83</sup> Fonda's trip to Hanoi did not challenge any spoken or unspoken law or custom about US civilian travel. Her infamy as a traitor to this vague code of travel restrictions for Americans stemmed more from Americans' discomfort with her image shift from sex symbol to activist than her passport stamps.

In hindsight, Fonda reflected on her nickname "Hanoi Jane" and explained how the criticism she received is gendered in nature.

Fonda wrote:

I realize that it is not just a US citizen laughing and clapping on a Vietnamese anti-aircraft gun: I am Henry Fonda's privileged daughter who appears to be

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<sup>83</sup> Barbara Hersberger, *Jane Fonda's War*, 1.

thumbing my nose at the country that has provided me these privileges. More than that, I am a woman, which makes my sitting there even more of a betrayal. A gender betrayal. And I am a woman who is seen as Barbarella, a character existing on some subliminal level as an embodiment of men's fantasies; Barbarella has become their enemy.<sup>84</sup>

Although American environmentalists, doctors, nurses, journalists, and curious activists traveled to North Vietnam by the hundreds throughout the war, these visits did not make front page news until Jane Fonda made the trip.

In his study of the cultural impact of the Hanoi Jane symbol on American memory, sociologist and Vietnam War cultural historian Jerry Lembcke argues that the Hanoi Jane symbol is primarily an extension of greater cultural tropes of traitorous women like Tokyo Rose and the women in the Greek myth of Lysistrata. Fonda's ever-changing public image generated distrust. The trope of female betrayal did not emerge out of thin air and instead took root in specific arguments about Fonda's evolving gender traits.<sup>85</sup> In a 1973 article that attacked Fonda's activities in North Vietnam, Fonda critic and Republican Representative from Connecticut Rep. Robert H. Steele alleged that Jane Fonda gave the "rottenest, most miserable performance by any one individual American in the history of our country."<sup>86</sup>

The bulk of the backlash against Fonda attacked her as a naïve girl in over her head in politics and later a mentally unstable woman. An August 1972 article entitled "Actress Jane the Child" exclaimed, "What Miss Fonda needs is a good spanking, something that daddy probably didn't do back when she was a little girl, for actions

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<sup>84</sup> Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far*, 318.

<sup>85</sup> Jerry Lembcke, *Hanoi Jane: War, Sex & Fantasies of Betrayal* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 70.

<sup>86</sup> "A nomination for Jane Fonda- April 17, 1973," April 17, 1973, Douglas Pike Collection, Folder 03, Box 09, The Vietnam Center and Archives, Texas Tech University.

unbecoming of a lady of stage and screen in this country.” The author proceeded to allege that Fonda acted “like a spoiled child at the wrong place and time” who showed no “maturity in world affairs.”<sup>87</sup> Another article entitled “No Foolish Girl” contended that Fonda’s actions in North Vietnam should not be dismissed as an immature lapse in judgment. Paul Harvey wrote, “The ‘kid glove’ treatment that gadfly Jane Fonda is receiving following her trip to North Vietnam is a stone hard example of the powderpuff permissiveness that is pointing this country in only one direction-downward.” Harvey argued that Fonda “is too old to have her actions excused as those of a foolish girl and too young to have them ignored as manifestations of senility.”<sup>88</sup> A few days earlier the Tuscaloosa News defended Fonda as “a gutsy girl. Right or wrong, she does what she thinks to be right.”<sup>89</sup> After her trip to Hanoi, many Americans referred to Fonda as a “girl” in a sexist way to scold her unpopular actions and put her in her place.

Fonda touched a nerve with American civilians in the early 1970s and although many veterans and soldiers supported and praised her contributions to the GI movement at the time, Vietnam and other veterans spoke out against Fonda in hindsight. The Hanoi Jane symbol proved an easy scapegoat for their perceived betrayal by the US government and American antiwar protestors. Many veterans who felt emasculated by their mistreatment during and after such a controversial war placed direct blame on Fonda. In a 1994 issue of the Vietnam War veteran newsletter “The Veteran Dispatch,” several articles addressed Fonda’s alleged betrayal in Vietnam. Fonda’s anti-aircraft machine gun photograph appeared at the end of an article about Fonda. The caption read, “Vietnam

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<sup>87</sup> “Actress Jane The Child,” *The Times-News*, August 7, 1972, 10.

<sup>88</sup> Paul Harvey, “No Foolish Girl,” *Observer Reporter*, July 31, 1972, 4.

<sup>89</sup> Paul Davis, “Jane Fonda: Guilty of Treason?”, *The Tuscaloosa News*, July 28, 1972.

vets say no apology will ever erase the picture of Jane Fonda in giggly bliss, laughing and clapping her hands, as she sits mounted in the gunner's seat."<sup>90</sup> This image had a lasting legacy because it immortalized Jane Fonda as the catchall antagonist who inflamed veterans' resentment towards their perceived mistreatment during and after the war. The National Vietnam P.O.W. Strike Force issued its official "Traitor List" the same year and informed its readers about how to destroy the political reputations of congressmen who allegedly did not support veterans and P.O.W.s. The list condemned politicians who may have supported Fonda as "queer-loving" and suggested, "you can even refer to them as communist child molesters who have sex with barnyard animals."<sup>91</sup> These alleged veteran-drafted documents reveal veterans' disgust with Fonda not when the war became highly unpopular in 1968, but decades later after more Americans collectively deemed the Vietnam War a quagmire.

The recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan regenerated this inflamed opposition to Jane Fonda and even in her 70s the actions of her youth overshadow every public move she makes. Over forty years after Fonda's trip to Hanoi, many anti-Fonda relics remain available for purchase on eBay. The most striking items encourage varying degrees of physical assault and debasement through urination and defecation aimed at Jane Fonda. The most disturbing eBay Hanoi Jane product available is a patch that depicts a North Vietnamese Communist soldier anally raping Hanoi Jane (Figure 9). In the patch's depiction of Fonda, or Hanoi Jane, she does not fight her captor and instead welcomes the

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<sup>90</sup> "The US Veteran Dispatch: June 17, 1994 Edition-June 17, 1994," June 1994, Garnett Bell Collection, Folder 11, Box 03, The Vietnam Center and Archives, Texas Tech University.

<sup>91</sup> "Fax From National Vietnam POW Strike Force- How to Trash a Candidate Who Has Betrayed the Vietnam POW/MIA Movement," Garnett Bell Collection, Folder 09, Box 22, The Vietnam Center Archives, Texas Tech University.



Figure 9. “*Traitor By Choice Commie By Inflection.*” Hanoi Jane bends willingly to Communist North Vietnamese demands, eBay.

abuse without protest. It reads, “Traitor by choice, commie by infection.”<sup>92</sup> The patch signifies Jane Fonda’s voluntary violation by North Vietnamese Communist forces. Jane Fonda tolerates an act of sodomy perpetrated by a yellow aggressor who is both immoral and inhumane. Jane Fonda’s humanitarian trip to investigate environmental destruction in Hanoi translated into a betrayal of the United States and also of the racial line drawn between white Americans and yellow Asian enemies in Vietnam. Mirroring the rhetoric of yellow peril, or the early twentieth century rhetoric that pinpointed Asian men as a threat to vulnerable white women, the patch testifies to not only gendered discomfort with Fonda’s actions, but racial discomfort.<sup>93</sup> Mary Martin courted Japanese diplomats and greeted South Vietnamese civilians on the streets of Saigon, but she always held the upper hand in her exchanges with Asians because it was her job to spread American cultural values to Asia. The eBay patch violently critiques Fonda’s straddling of racial lines in North Vietnam, as other items such as toilet paper and urinal target stickers essentially fetishize many Americans’ desired forms of punishment for Fonda’s betrayal. The Hanoi Jane insignia can also be found on toilet paper rolls and urinals. The insignia on the toilet paper roll reads, “Jane’s Fonda Communism” and as punishment for her political betrayal of the United States she is doomed to absorb men’s excrement (Figure 10).<sup>94</sup>

Several popular bumper stickers like “Jane Fonda American Traitor BITCH” and

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<sup>92</sup> “Hanoi Jane Jane Fonda Vietnam Patch,” accessed August 26, 2013, [http://www.eBay.com/itm/HANOI-JANE-JANE-FONDA-VIETNAM-PATCH-MINT-/151111120871?pt=LH\\_DefaultDomain\\_0&hash=item232eecb7e7](http://www.eBay.com/itm/HANOI-JANE-JANE-FONDA-VIETNAM-PATCH-MINT-/151111120871?pt=LH_DefaultDomain_0&hash=item232eecb7e7).

<sup>93</sup> Mary Ting Yi Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder, Miscegenation, and Other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the-Century New York City* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>94</sup> “Jane Fonda Toilet Paper,” accessed April 23, 2013, <https://www.ebay.com/itm/JANE-FONDA-TOILET-PAPER-/321112325497>.



Figure 10. “*Jane’s Fonda Communism.*” Hanoi Jane toilet paper proclaims that “Jane’s Fonda Communism” for added discomfort, eBay.



even urinal target stickers remain popular, campy items in anti-Fonda circles. eBay lists several urinal target stickers for sale with photographs that instruct buyers to stick them onto urinals and aim hard. One seller depicts a photograph of an actual urinal with Jane Fonda urinal target stickers (Figure 11). The seller's product caption reads:

This would be a great sticker to place in a bar, restaurant, or any urinal that gets a lot of use. Show your support and be proud to display the HANOI JANE urinal target. So you and all your friends can enjoy the feeling of relieving themselves at the expense of JANE.<sup>95</sup>

Jane Fonda urinal target stickers appear to retain the same popularity as trading baseball cards or other communal collectibles from boyhood. The eBay advertisements for these stickers work to generate a sense of camaraderie between collectors who can unite under a banner of Fonda defacement. Fonda's depiction in the patch, the toilet paper, and the urinal target stickers punishes her actions in Hanoi almost forty years later. All three products demonstrate the lasting legacy of resentment towards Jane Fonda.

Following a Fox News.com news story that reported that Jane Fonda would portray former first lady Nancy Reagan in Lee Daniels' film *The Butler*, the article's accompanying online comment board summarizes the contemporary resonance of the forty-year-old Hanoi Jane debate. The comments condemned the hypocrisy of Fonda's portrayal of a beloved Republican first lady and generated a one-sided debate about Fonda's presumed inadequacy to appear in a film about American politics. One comment read, "She is a traitorous bitch that does not deserve anything but strife in her life. She was the cause of many of our true heroes being beat. She deserves to be placed in a pit

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<sup>95</sup> "Jane Fonda Urinal Target Stickers," accessed May 24, 2013, [http://www.eBay.com/itm/HANOI-JANE-URINAL-TARGET-vinyl-sticker-4-1-2-place-on-any-flat-surface-vietnam-/221226585826?pt=LH\\_DefaultDomain\\_0&hash=item338221cee2](http://www.eBay.com/itm/HANOI-JANE-URINAL-TARGET-vinyl-sticker-4-1-2-place-on-any-flat-surface-vietnam-/221226585826?pt=LH_DefaultDomain_0&hash=item338221cee2).



Figure 11. “*Hanoi Jane Urinal Target*.” Hanoi Jane’s face graces urinals throughout men’s bathrooms in the United States, eBay.

and have feces thrown on her for a long time.” Other posts read, “Jane Fonda is a traitor and a spoiled child; not a woman,” “Jane Fonda: A TRAITOR and A TRAMP!!!!,” “Jane Fonda is a treasonous C U Next Tuesday,” “ugliest OLD HAG still alive,” and “She should have been executed by the United States the moment she came back from North Vietnam!!!”<sup>96</sup>

Anti-Fonda rhetoric from the early 1970s attacked Fonda for her childishness and mental instability. The Hanoi Jane symbol remains a catchall for resentment towards the mishandling of the Vietnam War and its aftermath, its complicated legacy in American memory, and generalized hatred of left-wing figures like Jane Fonda. Jane Fonda’s appearance on *The Donahue Show* in September 1972 exposed many Americans’ outrage over Fonda’s troublesome politics and Fonda’s battle to speak out against the war regardless of the humiliating public backlash. Although Fonda presented herself as a thoroughly informed and articulate citizen, the shadow of Hanoi Jane continues to cloud her legacy as a pop culture icon. In North Vietnam, Jane Fonda detached herself from her roles as a call-girl, cowgirl, and Barbarella and embodied women’s changing roles as political activists, feminists, and advocates for social change.

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<sup>96</sup> “Jane Fonda tells veterans boycotting her movie ‘The Butler’ to ‘get a life’,” April 11, 2013, <http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2013/04/11/jane-fonda-tells-veterans-boycotting-her-movie-butler-to-get-life/#comments>.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

The Vietnam War is a model of gendered representation and misrepresentation. The US State Department capitalized on Martin's Broadway-darling persona and marketed her as the ideally feminine, middle-aged heterosexual woman best equipped to Americanize potential Asian allies in Japan and enchant South Vietnamese allies in the face of Communist revolution. Fonda remains the scapegoat of the American defeat in Vietnam because as a vocal feminist and antiwar activist, she aided and abetted enemy forces in North Vietnam and through her ugly, unfeminine politics, inspired the Communist North Vietnamese to win the war against the United States.

In American cultural memory, Mary Martin functioned as the perfectly disguised weapon of containment in Asia during the Cold War. Martin is the Kennedy Center Honoree, the sainted nun Maria Von Trapp, the Pan Am pinup girl, the mother of actor Larry Hagman, and the Broadway darling who stole hearts in Vietnam. Jane Fonda's unbecoming politics henceforth defined her public persona. Fonda's legacy warns of the dangers of radical feminist protest amidst war and international conflicts. Over forty years after her fateful trip to Hanoi, Fonda remains the bitch who lost the war, the pinko slut that harassed detained American P.O.W.s, the pinup girl whose once treasured centerfolds are now defamed, and the insignia on materials designed for defecation.

Mary Martin and Jane Fonda represent two performers placed at two different ends of a Cold War era gender spectrum. On an international stage where Americans, Asians, and Communists all observed the actions of these public women, Peter Pan became a beautiful matchmaker, Barbarella became a manly feminist, and the Vietnam War became a landmine of gender misrepresentation.

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